RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
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ESCHSCHOLTZIA CALIFORNICA CROCEA

CALIFORNIA-POPPY

Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

ESCHSCHOLTZIA CALIFORNICA CROCEA

CALIFORNIA-POPPY

Papaveraceae . Poppy Family

A vigorous perennial, blooming the first season, 1-2 ft. in height and spread, persisting for many years under ideal conditions. Stems leafy, juicy and brittle, with 10-14 longitudinal striations. Herbage green or glaucous-green, especially when young. Leaves on long petioles, ternately dissected into 5-7 main divisions, these further dissected, ultimate segments 1/8- 1/4 inch wide, ½-1 inch long. Flowers are few to several on long peduncles rising above the leaves, or sometimes leafless on stems 12-18 in. long. Flower buds about 2 in. long, base expanded into a structure called the torus which has a collar or rim about ½ in. across, this usually reddish above. Sepals united into a cap-like body called the calyptra which is pushed off in one piece by the opening flower. Corolla usually of 4 (4-6) petals, these broadly fan-shaped, 2-3 in. long, deep orange with a satiny luster. Late spring and summer flowers are much smaller, clear yellow, or yellow with an orange blotch at base of petal. Stamens 20-45, ¼-½ in. long, similar in color to the petals. Stigmas 4-8 or more. Capsule erect, 2-4 in. long, ¼ in. in diameter, 1-celled, 2-valved, opening from the base and forcibly scattering the seeds which are gray-brown and finely reticulated. Cotyledons are 2-cleft.

The genus Eschscholtzia is confined to Western North America but is best represented in California where many distinctive species are found in all regions except in the very high mountains. The original California-Poppy is confined to the coastal region and was described in 1820 by Edelburt von Chamisso in honor of Dr. J. F. Eschscholtz, who had been surgeon on a voyage of exploration which visited San Francisco in 1816, at which time Chamisso collected specimens. Over 40 kinds of perennial California-Poppies have been named since, of which many have distinctive features, but they are all alike in that they have 2-cleft cotyledons and a broad torus rim. One of the most outstanding of these was described a little later as E. crocea by Bentham, an English botanist. It has since been reduced to a variety of E. californica. The variety crocea is the most widespread California-Poppy and is best developed in the interior valleys where it formerly covered hundreds of square miles. Cultivation of this form has caused it to spread to many areas in California

where it probably did not originally grow. It has also become established in the wild in many foreigh lands where it has been cultivated.

Small colonies of the California-Poppy are still to be found nearly anywhere in California, but most of the vast areas on which it once made living carpets of gold have been greatly reduced by cultivation. Largest remaining stands are probably in Antelope Valley, Los Angeles Co., the San Joaquin Valley around Shafter, Kern Co., and in many parts of the Sacramento Valley. These areas are often at their best in April and May and are the Mecca for thousands of flower lovers who are guided to the exact spots by newspaper accounts, chamber of commerce bulletins, oil company leaflets and by special road signs. Every interested person should visit one of these areas before it is further reduced in size and see Nature's prodigality with this one species.

We have grown two strains of E. californica crocea. The one so abundant in the Garden at present originally came from Antelope Valley and is a splendid type. Another strain collected in 1937 near Durham, Butte Co., appears to be even better in cultivation and had produced early flowers 6 to 7 in. across when spread out.

Plant breeders early recognized the possibilities of producing new forms of the California-Poppy and now offer a wide range of single and double forms in many colors. Most of these are of easy culture, but for ordinary use the "regular" California-Poppy is the most useful. Seed can be obtained from any seedsman. The plants will grow in almost any soil, have few or no pests or diseases and when once established will live for many years. For beautification of odd corners, vacant lots, parkways or roadsides there is probably no other flower that can be used more successfully. Seeds planted in the fall or winter will bloom the following spring and continue through the summer if watered.

California-Poppies ordinarily remain open until about 4 P.M. but on very dull or rainy days do not open. Bouquets for night use may be made to open if the flowers are put in the dark for several hours and then brought to the light about an hour before needed.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of the native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

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